

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 066152

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T STATE 066152

EXDIS

E. O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: MASS, KU

SUBJECT: KUWAITI REQUEST FOR U. S. ASSISTANCE WITH AIR
COVER

REF: KUWAIT 1081, 1098, 1099

1. FYI: WE HAVE EXAMINED DIFFERENT AVENUES IN EFFORT
BE RESPONSIVE TO GOK REQUEST ON HOW BEST ACQUIRE AIR
COVER BY FASTEST POSSIBLE MEANS. AIR COVER WOULD REQUIRE
THE PRESENCE OF A HIGHLY- TRAINED SQUADRON WITH FACILITIES
AND PERSONNEL FOR CLOSE GROUND COORDINATION. THIS SIMPLY
NOT A SHELF ITEM THAT CAN BE PURCHASED. IF KUWAIT IS
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PAGE 02 STATE 066152

SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATING ACQUIRING IMMEDIATE AIR COVER, WE SEE ONLY TWO POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION. EACH HAS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES:

A. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR KUWAITIS TO APPROACH IRANIANS DISCREETLY TO SEEK THEIR ASSISTANCE. ADVANTAGES WOULD BE PROXIMITY AND FACT THAT PREPOSITIONING IN KUWAIT WOULD THEREFORE NOT BE REQUIRED SINCE AIRCRAFT COULD BE KEPT AT IRANIAN BASES CLOSE TO GULF AND THEIR MISSION COULD REMAIN SECRET. THESE AIRCRAFT WOULD BE HELD IN RESERVE FOR USE ONLY IN EVENT OF ACTUAL IRAQI ATTACK ON KUWAIT. MOREOVER, IRANIAN AIRCRAFT WOULD BE QUALITATIVELY MUCH SUPERIOR AGAINST IRAQI AIRCRAFT. DISADVANTAGES ARE THAT KUWAITIS SUSPECT IRANIANS OF SEEKING

EXERT THEIR MILITARY POWER IN GULF AND GOK/ IRANIAN RELATIONS TEPID. GOK COULD EXPECT CRITICISM IN ARAB WORLD IF IT BECAME KNOWN THEY HAD TURNED TO IRANIANS AND MIGHT BE UNWILLING CONSIDER THIS OPTION. MOREOVER, THERE MIGHT BE COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM IN GETTING IRANIAN AIR FORCE OVER KUWAIT IN SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. BECAUSE IRANIAN BASES NECESSARILY FURTHER FROM COMBAT AREA THAN IRAQI ONES, IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT FOR IRANIANS TO MAINTAIN SUFFICIENT AIR COVER OVER KUWAIT TO ENSURE AIR SUPREMACY.

B. SECOND POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO APPROACH JORDANIANS TO POSITION RJAF F-104 SQUADRON IN KUWAIT. THIS WOULD HAVE ADVANTAGE OF OBTAINING SUPPORT FROM FRIENDLY ARAB STATE AND WOULD GIVE HIGH VISIBILITY. LATTER COULD BE ESPECIALLY USEFUL IF KUWAIT WISHED USE PRESENCE OF SQUADRON AS EVIDENCE IT NOT PLANNING BACK DOWN IN FACE IRAQI DEMANDS. IT MIGHT ALSO MOVE GOK RENEW ITS KHARTOUM SUBSIDIES TO JORDAN. DISADVANTAGES ARE THAT PRESENCE OF RJAF SQUADRON COULD BRING ABOUT ESCALATION TENSIONS BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT, AND JORDANIANS AND KUWAITIS COULD FEEL ARAB WRATH FOR TAKING BULL BY HORNS RATHER THAN ALLOWING ARAB DIPLOMATIC MILLS CONTINUE TO CHURN. JORDANIANS WOULD ALSO FEEL VULNERABLE AT HOME AND WOULD WANT ASSURANCES OF AIR SUPPORT FROM OTHER QUARTERS. WHILE GOK COULD BE EXPECTED MEET FINANCIAL COSTS JORDANIAN DEPLOYMENT, GOJ WOULD PROBABLY SEEK U. S. SECRET

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PAGE 03 STATE 066152

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT (SPARES, AMMUNITION, ETC.) TO ENABLE

F-104 BE MAINTAINED IN OPERATIONAL READINESS. END FYI.

2. IN LIGHT FOREGOING ANALYSIS, AMBASSADOR SHOULD TELL GOK WE HAVE GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO QUESTION IT HAS RAISED. THERE IS NO FEASIBLE WAY FOR KUWAIT TO ESTABLISH AN INSTANT AIR FORCE BY HIRING PILOTS AND BUYING HIGH- PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT. U. S., HOWEVER, STANDS PREPARED TO OFFER, AS WE HAVE FOR PAST YEAR, TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT (INCLUDING F-5 E) WHICH WILL PROVIDE KUWAIT IN LONG RUN WITH EFFECTIVE MODERN AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY. PRESENT EMERGENCY HIGHLIGHTS ONCE AGAIN DESIRABILITY FOR KUWAIT TO ACQUIRE AN AIRCRAFT COMPATIBLE WITH THOSE BEING OBTAINED BY FRIENDLY STATES IN AREA.

3. TO MEET IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IN EVENTUALITY BORDER ISSUE WITH IRAQ CANNOT BE RESOLVED THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS OR DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, WE SEE ONLY TWO FEASIBLE OPTIONS TO ASSURE DEGREE OF AIR COVER IN SHORT TERM. WE DO NOT ADVOCATE ONE OPTION OVER THE OTHER.

A. ONE WOULD BE FOR GOK TO MAKE A DISCREET APPROACH TO IRANIANS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT IN EVENT OF EMERGENCY. SINCE IRANIAN AIR FORCE ONLY MINUTES AWAY FROM POTENTIAL AREA OF CONFLICT, PREPOSITIONING OF IRANIAN PLANES ON KUWAITI SOIL WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY AND SUCH CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENT COULD REMAIN SECRET. THIS WOULD HAVE ADVANTAGE OF PROVIDING KUWAITIS WITH SECRET INSURANCE POLICY AGAINST ACTUAL ATTACK BY IRAQ.

B. SECOND POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO PREPOSITION ELEMENTS OF ROYAL JORDANIAN AIR FORCE F-104' S IN KUWAIT. THIS OPTION HAS ADVANTAGE OF RELYING ON ARAB SISTER STATE. PREPOSITIONING REQUIREMENT WOULD LEND ELEMENT OF HIGH VISIBILITY. DEPENDING ON CIRCUMSTANCES, IT COULD EITHER PROVIDE UNWANTED FURTHER ESCALATION OR CONVERSELY A WELCOME SHOW OF FORCE IF KUWAIT FELT THIS NECESSARY TO DEMONSTRATE ITS FIRMNESS. WE WOULD SUPPORT GOK IF IT SOUGHT THIS ALTERNATIVE. GOK WOULD, OF COURSE, NEED TO BEAR FINANCIAL COSTS OF ANY TRANSFER OF JORDANIAN
SECRET

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PAGE 04 STATE 066152

AIRCRAFT AND GROUND FORCES AND THEIR EQUIPMENT. IF GOK CONSIDERED PREPOSITIONING RJAF SQUADRON NOT POSSIBLE FOR POLITICAL REASONS, IT MIGHT CONSIDER INVITING VISIT OF SOME RJAF AIRCRAFT.

4. FOR TEHRAN: WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR ASSESSMENT OF GOI
REACTION WERE GOK TO MAKE APPROACH ALONG LINES OF FIRST
OPTION. ROGERS

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